



Seattle Human Rights Commission

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February 1, 2013

Hon. Jamie Pederson, Chairman
Committee on Judiciary
Washington State House of Representatives
436B Legislative Building
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Re: Request for Committee Hearing on Death Penalty Legislation

Dear Chairman Pederson:

On behalf of the Seattle Human Rights Commission, I would like to thank you for co-sponsoring HB 1504 that would eliminate the death penalty in favor of life incarceration. The Commission respectfully urges the Judiciary Committee to hold a public hearing on HB 1504 during this legislative session.

The Commission is committed to advancing human rights, including laws and practices concerning the deprivation of life and cruel or degrading punishment. The Commission believes that Washington's death penalty violates these rights. Thus, we strongly support the elimination of the death penalty in Washington.

There is a growing interest in re-examining Washington's use of the death penalty not only because it is applied unfairly but also because of its enormous costs to state taxpayers. And yet, there is no evidence that it acts as an effective deterrent in preventing crime. Furthermore, there is the question of whether the death penalty disproportionately impacts African-Americans and other people of color in violation of the human right to equal treatment under law.

A hearing on HB 1504 would provide an important opportunity for the public to hear an informative discussion of the merits and effectiveness of the death penalty in Washington as well as arguments for replacing the death penalty with life without parole. The Commission would be glad to discuss its views and the international human rights framework regarding the death penalty at such a hearing.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Felicia Yearwood at felicia.yearwood@seattle.gov or (206) 684-4537. Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "C. Stearns".

Chris Stearns, Chairman

Cc: Rep. Reuven Carlyle